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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2516  
RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 003442

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SRAP, SCA/FRONT OFFICE, SCA/A, AND SCA/PPD  
PASS TO BBG

E.O. 12958 DECL: 10/27/2019

TAGS: ECPS OIIP PROP BBG ECIN PREL PK AF

SUBJECT: PRESSING AFGHANS ON VOA MEDIUM-WAVE TRANSMITTING STATION IN KHOS

REF: STATE 58063

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting on October 26, Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone pressed Afghan Foreign Minister Spanta again to urge Minister of Culture and Information Khorram to allow the final construction and operation of a medium-wave transmitting station in Khost. Once operational, the tower, operated by the Broadcast Board of Governors (BBG) would have ample reach to transmit Voice of America (VOA) and other radio programs into Pakistan. Recalling Secretary Clinton's recent warm telephone call with President Karzai, Ricciardone noted the Secretary's role as ex officio chair of the BBG. Ricciardone explained that the MOIC has not responded to our June 28 dipnote request to approve the final work, despite our having twice raised it since June with the MFA Chief of Protocol, Ambassador Siddiq. He also reminded Spanta that SRAP Holbrooke had raised the issue with President Karzai and Spanta on August 21.

¶2. (C) Minister Spanta said he would raise the issue October 27 with Minister Khorram, but he expected that Khorram -- "a stubborn ideologue" -- would prove difficult as ever. Spanta pledged this time, however, to lobby President Karzai to order Minister Khorram to relent, if Spanta on his own proved unable to persuade Khorram.

EIKENBERRY